

# Spirit of Fire

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Summary: In 2531 the UNSC Spirit of Fire, one of the largest ships ever commissioned in the early days of the war, simply disappeared. Some say that the Captain gave up on the war, while others believe that he was pursuing a great threat. No one knew what really happened, until now.

## 1. Chapter 1

**\*\*Chapter 1\*\***

**\*\*Date:\*\*** February 4th, 2531

><strong>System:<strong> Epsilon Indi

><strong>Planet:<strong> Harvest

><strong>Location:<strong> Quadrant 4, somewhere near Alpha Base

><strong>Objective:<strong> Recon enemy forces

Sergeant John Forge, his M90 close assault weapon system slung firmly over his back, pulled his high powered binoculars from his waist and raised them to his eyes. Great gusts of wind, filled with snow, regularly assaulted his shivering form as he lay concealed in a poorly sheltered nook, which was itself located near the top of a massive ice shelf that overlooked a set of ancient, yet advanced, ruins.

>Legions of Grunts, the covenant's canon fodder, swarmed in and out of the ruin's arch-like entrance. Elites stood guard at regular intervals, overseeing and coordinating whatever operation it was that was being run.<br>"Well well well," Forge mumbled to himself, scanning the hive of activity below him "what have we here."

>A purple phantom glided into his view, its hull gleaming in the dull light. An Elite dropped out of its underbelly and landed in the snow below, its form massive and menacing. It strode forwards, Grunts and Elites stepping out of its way in fear and respect.<br>"Huh," Forge said, continuing to speak to himself "you are one big split-mouth. What are you doing all the way out here?"

>The Elite was speaking to another, gold clad Elite of obvious lesser rank. They were conversing in what Forge assumed to be low grunts and growls when Forge decided to get a better look. He twisted the rim of his binoculars and the big Elite's form became even larger, though somewhat less clear.<br>Forge narrowed his eyes as he took in the Elite's grey, plate like armour and that was when the Elite turned around and glared straight at Forge, as though it knew it was being watched. Forge hastily crawled backwards, away from the lip of the shelf and radioed his commanding officer.

>"Sergeant Forge, report." Came Captain Cutter's voice.<br>"Definitely plenty of bad guys down here sir," Forge replied, clipping the binocs back onto his belt "looks like they found something in the ice."

>"Dammit," Cutter swore, his voice emanating from Forge's ear piece "that complicates things. Anders, what have you got?"<br>Anders was a civilian scientist that had joined them several weeks prior to their reassignment to Harvest. She was a headstrong women who constantly disregarded Forge's thoughts on her safety, something which both endeared him towards her and antagonised him at the same time.

>"Captain, scans on the Northern Polar region shows some interesting Covenant activity on the surface." Anders replied, as Forge lay listening in the snow "There's some kind of structure down there."<br>Forge shifted his weight and readjusted his position so that he was sitting instead of lying and consequently missed out on part of the conversation.

>"Forge I'm sending you some new objectives," Cutter ordered "you are to pull back to Alpha Base and get it under control, we're going to send you back up once you've recaptured it and get it back up to operational status."<br>"I'll get it done sir." Forge acknowledged, his hand pressed to his ear so that he could hear.

>"I'll get my equipment ready." Anders added.<br>"Lady, there's no way you are coming down here on the first bird." Forge cut in.

>He didn't like babysitting civilians, especially ones that didn't listen to him.<br>"Forge you have your orders," Cutter said, breaking up the argument before it could start "get Alpha Base under control, I'm sending you some backup."

>"Roger that," Forge grumbled "Forge out."<br>Forge unslung his shotgun and grasped it with both hands before setting off back the way he had come. He jogged down the back of the ice shelf, sometimes jumping from outcropping to outcropping when the way became too steep and finally arrived back at his Warthog after ten minutes.

>Private Papadakis, a young Greek man of twenty one years whom Forge simply referred to as Pad, sat in the passenger seat, looking very nervous. An accompanying marine of the name Jeong manned the turret and he swung it round to bear on Forge as he approached.<br>"Easy boys, it's just me." Forge said, sliding into the drivers seat "We've got a new objective."

>"Geez sarge you scared the crap out of me." Pad said, as Forge brought the Warthog's engine to life "Thought you were an Elite or something."<br>"What did you see?" Jeong asked, as they drove over a long abandoned road towards Alpha Base "And what's our next move?"

>"The Captain wants us to secure Alpha Base," Forge replied, shouting to be heard over the roar of the engine "then we're going to assault the Forerunner Ruins on the other side of the ice shelf."<br>"Alpha Base?" Pad said, his expression incredulous "The Covenant are pounding it, and they own everything east of the ice shelf. How the hell are we supposed to take them on?!"

>"Relax private," Forge said, as Jeong scoured the passing

surroundings with his turret "we'll get it done. Captain Cutter will send down reinforcements as soon as we secure Alpha Base."<p>

The sounds of people fighting and dying reached them long before they reached it. Forge gunned the engine as soon as he heard it, driving them over a massive jump and landing them safely on the ground below it.

>He swung the Warthog to his left, driving through a narrow pass and shouted out orders to his passengers as they neared the base.<br>"Pad," he yelled, as the pass widened "I need you to call out targets and threats, make sure I'm not driving blind."  
>"Got it sir." Pad relied, cocking his rifle.<br>Forge would need to focus all his attention on driving and so would be relying on Pad to call out a safe pass through the chaos, while also calling out targets to Jeong.

>"Jeong, your job's simple." Forge continued, as Alpha Base came into view "Gun em down."<br>Forge pushed the acceleration pedal as far as it would go and the Warthog lurched forwards, off of the small cliff they were on and onto the ground below.

>Alpha Base consisted of four main structures, all located within a large, circular depression in the iced wasteland. The first building was a large metal HQ dug into the left side of the depression, a standard issue barracks directly opposite it and to the north, sealing off the ravines' opening was a large wall.<br>The fourth building was a watchtower, situated behind the wall, and it had taken a hell of a beating. Its upper half had been bombarded by hundreds of plasma shells and was now nothing more then a smoking, sizzling ruin.

>The wall hadn't fared much better either, its twin gates lay smashed and ruined on the ground, their surfaces burnt and charred. Lying just within the walls was a Covenant Wraith, though its chassis had taken several hits from rockets and it now lay smouldering in the centre of the battlefield.<br>The UNSC forces, several squads of marines, were spread out near the HQ, seeking what little cover they could from the onslaught of lethal plasma being fired at them by the Covenant squads that were advancing towards them.

>Forge aimed the bonnet of the Warthog towards the Wraith and accelerated straight down the middle of the battlefield, cutting a line between the two forces.<br>Pad's voice barked regularly in Forge's ear, falling out targets and areas to avoid. Jeong's gun roared to life and three Grunt's fell to the ground, their luminescent blood staining the snow around them.

>A plasma bolt slammed into the Warthog's chasis, narrowly missing Pad's head and Jeong quickly gunned down the Elite responsible, scattering its squad and maiming its corpse with bullets.<br>Forge hit the brakes and drifted around the remains of the Wraith, leaving streaks behind them in the snow. The Warthog cleared the Wraith and Jeong's gun found the enemy once again.

>Two more Elites were cut down, along with at least seven Grunts. The Warthog took several more hits in return, one of them struck the engine block, dissolving through the hood and the Warthog slowed considerably.<br>"Ah crap!" Forge yelled, as the Warthog began to die "Jeong, hold em off."

>"You got it sir!" Jeong replied, continuing to fire off lethal rounds by the hundreds "They're starting to- Ungh!"<br>A blue bolt of plasma slammed into Jeong's chest, knocking him off of the Warthog.

>"Jeong!" Pad yelled, leaning out of his seat.<br>Jeong's body hit the ground and rolled to a stop. He didn't get up.

>"Leave it!" Forge yelled, he knew there was no helping his

gunner.<br>He swung the sputtering Warthog back around to face the Covenant and saw that they were retreating back through the destroyed gates. Most of the Elites were dead and the remaining ones were busy ordering a retreat.

>Forge let them go as the Warthog finally died and rolled to a slow stop. The lot of the Covenant forces disappeared through the gate and suddenly everything was quiet. Pad jumped out of the car and sprinted over to Jeong's lifeless body, while Forge stepped out and approached the marines.<br>"Thank god you guys got here when you did." Said a marine, emerging from behind a wrecked Warthog.

>The other marines, sixteen of them, were busy pulling off their helmets and sighing with relief.<br>"A minute longer and we would have been done for." The marine continued, he didn't bother to ask about Jeong.

>"Happy to help." Forge replied, setting off towards the HQ "What's the situation here?"<br>"Thirty-five dead and numerous structural damages." The marine said, relaying the details of the battle to Forge "Sir we getting reinforcements?"

>"Yeah," Forge said, as Pad began to converse with some marines "we've got new objectives too. We're going to fix this base up, then go kick the Covenant's ass."<br>"Sir?" The marine asked, his tone surprised "We just got our ass kicked. How the hell are we going to take on the Covenant in this state? Sixteen shell shocked marines and a destroyed Warthog aren't going to make much of a dent."

>"Marine, relax." Forge said, putting a hand on the marines shoulder and giving him a reassuring smile "Those reinforcements I was talking about, are just arriving."<br>The marine came to a stop and looked towards the sky. Six heavy duty pelicans, carrying supplies and men were soaring towards them.

## 2. Chapter 2

**\*\*Chapter 2\*\***

**\*\*Date:\*\*** February 4th, 2531

**\*\*System:\*\*** Epsilon Indi

**\*\*Planet:\*\*** Harvest

**\*\*Location:\*\*** Quadrant 4, deep within Forerunner ruin

**\*\*Objective:\*\*** Determine reason for covenant interest in the "Relic"

The all too familiar smell of burnt metal and expired plasma flooded Forge's nose as he helped a marine pull an Elite corpse off of the pathway. The fight for the control room, which is what Forge assumed it to be, had been short but brutal. A dozen marines had been cut down by the Covenant's lethal weaponry and Pad had taken a glancing round to the shoulder, searing his flesh but otherwise leaving him unharmed.

Forge and the marine dropped the corpse with an oomph, and Forge stretched his back with a sigh.

"Damn aliens weigh a ton." He grunted, as the marine moved off to cart more bodies out of huge path.

The control room was subject to the same architectural designs as most other Forerunner buildings, with semi transparent floors and semi diamond shaped arches and doors. Its lighting systems had long since expired and so they relied on the left over plasma lights to see.

"Sergeant!" Pad called, leading a group of four marines and Anders over towards him.

Pad's face was flushed with excitement, the battle was over but the thrill still lingered on for the young marine. Anders' face of the other hand was slack with awe as she stared around at the thousand year old building.

"Give me a run down Pad," Forge said, as he began leading them towards the central platform "and make sure the bad news comes first."

"Most of our men are down or injured sir," Pad began, taking off his helmet "everyone whose able to fight is in this room and the reinforcements haven't been mobilised yet."

"Sergeant, is this what the aliens were after?" Anders cut in, voicing her question over an annoyed Pad.

"Seems so ma'am," Forge replied as they reached the platform "they sure paid a price trying to defend it, all quiet now."

Forge held up a closed fist and the squad behind him came to a halt, save for Anders who continued forwards.

She crossed to the panel that occupied the platforms centre and to her surprise a small sphere, slightly smaller then a basket ball, slid out of the panel to meet her. After a moments hesitation she reached out to touch it, only to be stopped by Forge as he grasped her wrist.

"Hey!" He exclaimed, pulling her back "What do you think you're doing?"

The marines behind him had ventured closer as well, cautious but curios none the less.

"Nothing ventured," Anders began, shaking her hand free "nothing gained."

She placed her hand on the sphere's cool surface and sections of its surface began to light up. Several of them held their breath as the sphere began to spin and all of them jumped backwards as light exploded forth from the small object.

"Whoa!" Forge yelled, as a holographic planet whizzed past his head.

Anders raised her head to find it surrounded by a strange star system, its planets and orbit lines flickering as the ancient power source struggled to complete its duty.

"Now that's..." Anders began, at a loss for words "not what I expected."

"What system is that?" Pad asked, his eyes wide.

"I've got no idea." Forge replied.

\_Psew-thunk!\_

Forge spun to face the source of the sound and saw one of his marines fall face first onto the floor, a pink need sticking out of his back.

"Take cover!" Pad yelled, as more Elites materialised out of thin air, their active camouflage melting off of their skin.

Forge dragged Anders down behind a railing as bullets and plasma began to fly around the room.

"Stay down!" He said, as a marine adjacent to him threw him his shotgun "These guys just don't know when to quit!"

He leant out from behind the railing and fired a shot towards a grunt, eviscerating its upper body, then ducked down behind the railing again a the marine who had tossed him his shotgun took a bolt to the chest.

"Uh, Spirit?" He radioed, as several more marines were shot dead "Forge here, we're gonna need a little backup."

Captain Cutter gripped the edged of the holographic display table as Forge's static and combat filled message came through.

"This is Forge, we've been ambushed at the Relic site! I'm pinned down with Anders, we're taking heavy losses, we need reinforcements now!" Forge demanded, his voice was hard to hear.

"Sergeant, Alpha Base won't be able to respond in time," Cutter replied, his breath coming in fast short bursts "we've got Grizzlies inbound from Spirit of Fire, hold on down there."

Serina, the Spirit Of Fire's AI materialised next to Cutter, casting her low, blue glow over his face.

"Ah, Grizzly tanks." She said in her sarcastic tone "Forge's pet project."

"Carmine let's go!" Sergeant Holland yelled, motioning for the private to get inside the grizzly.

"On my way sir!" Carmine replied "Here we go Brutus, time for your christening!"

Carmine climbed up onto Brutus' massive form and dropped down through the hatch. He took his position at the controls while Holland sealed the hatch shut behind him.

"Ready to Rock sarge?" Asked the eager marine, keying the tank's ignition into life.

"Focus private." Holland growled, as the deck staff outside finished attaching the Grizzly to the Pelican.

The Grizzly Brutus and its twin Caesar hit the ground running, their spiked treads tearing into the ice and dragging them forwards with incredible speed. They raced over the icy wasteland, smashing through chunks of frozen water and throwing up a wake of hale and icy slate behind them.

Inside the tanks the occupants were bounced and jiggled up and down by the rough movement and they almost missed Forge's messages.

"This is Forge," came his voice, struggling to be heard over the noise inside the tank "we're under heavy fire!"

"We're on out way sir!" Holland replied, almost having to yell into his headset to be heard.

The Grizzlies reached the entrance to the Forerunner structure, which was swarming with Grunt's and their Elite handlers.

"Hoo Hoo Hoo! Here we go!" Carmine hollered, as he swung the turret to bear on the alien swarm

\_Ka-Boom!\_

The grunts exploded into a airborne sea of blood and bone as twin tank shells detonated amongst their midst. The Elites fared no better and their shield proved to be utterly ineffective against the Grizzly's power. Holland pushed Brutus onwards, through the soupy alien remains and down into the Forerunner structure.

Sam, a young, blonde marine was thrown violently backwards as a blue plasma bolt slammed into his throat, killing him instantly. Forge shied away from the sight and shoved another round into his shotgun.

"I've got men down," he radioed, for the third time "where are those reinforcements!?"

As if on cue two massive Grizzly Tanks, which Forge instantly recognised as Caesar and Brutus came roaring into the chamber. Their mounted machine gun turrets made quick work of the Covenant forces and it wasn't long before all of the aliens lay dead on the floor.

The turrets ceased firing and the whole thing ended just as quickly as it had began.

"About time!" Forge yelled with relief, standing up "I was down to my last clip!"

"Sorry we're late sir, had quite a bit of ground to cover." Said one of the tank's operators.

"Brutus and Caesar," Forge continued as Anders struggled to her feet "the two meanest tanks to ever grace this planet with their treads."

"Grizzlies," Anders muttered, slightly shell shocked "well at least I know how to repair them."

"I made a few improvements," Forge boasted, obviously proud "my own special upgrades."

He turned to face his remaining marines, which were six in total.

"Alright marines we're getting out of here," he yelled "stick behind the Grizzlies and let them clear the way, we're moving fast and hasty. Don't get pinned down."

The Grizzlies trundled off back the way they had come and Forge, Anders and the marines raced off after them, sticking close behind them at all times.

"Sergeant Forge," Brutus' officer radioed "our evac point is at the ruin's entrance, we've got three heavy duty Pelicans ready for pickup, but the Covenant's closing in fast."

"Got it," Forge replied, then "DOUBLE TIME IT MARINES!"

The soldiers picked up the pace, with Forge carrying Anders along by the arm.

They reached the entrance in just under two minutes, their breath coming in ragged gasps. Three Pelicans came swooping down to meet them, their jets counteracting their fall to bring them to a smooth halt.

The Pelicans were just about to touch down when a roiling green ball of plasma came screaming out of nowhere, straight into Brutus' side. The Grizzly exploded sideways, as the metal of its hull melted away. Whoever had been inside at the time had died screaming and Caesar quickly brought its turret round to bear on the offenders as Forge and his marines scrambled for the Pelicans.

"We need to get the hell out of here now!" Forge yelled, as Covenant vehicles came gliding over the icy dunes towards them.

The Pelicans lowered their rear doors and Forge's marines began piling in. Forge helped Anders into one of the Pelican's when another was struck by a Hunter's cannon. It veered sideways, its engine smoking, but otherwise remained flying.

Forge hoisted himself up into Anders Pelican just as the Covenant vehicles entered firing range. Four Ghosts began to strafe around Caesar, firing round after round of plasma into its side and rear sections. The third Pelican managed to lock its loading gear onto Caesar's frame amidst the chaos and it immediately put all of its energy into heading straight up.

The three Pelicans, one of which was smoking, took off into the sky, leaving behind both the Forerunner ruins and Brutus' smoking wreck. The Covenant continued to fire at them until they were out of range, scoring many hits on the retreating Pelicans heavy armour.

Inside his Pelican, Forge dropped his weapon and sighed with relief, as the turbulence outside jostled him up and down in his seat.

"This is Forge here," he said, radioing Captain Cutter "we made it. We made it."



"Good work." The Captain replied, relief evident in his voice  
"Professor, I want to be briefed on your findings as soon as you're  
on board."

"You got it captain." Anders said, what she really wanted was rest  
but at least it was better then being shot at.

End  
file.